

Claims

- [c1] **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**
1. A system for automatically providing peripheral awareness of information of interest to a first user, comprising:
representing the information of interest with at least one ticket, each ticket comprising a customizable dynamic encapsulated object;
using at least one viewer for defining how the information of interest represented by each ticket is displayed;
pairing at least one viewer with each ticket; and
hosting at least one ticket/viewer pairs in at least one container on a display device, wherein each ticket/viewer pair is represented by a thumbnail displayed in one of the containers.
 - [c2] 2. The system of claim 1 further comprising using more or more services for automatically and dynamically tracking a current state of the information of interest.
 - [c3] 3. The system of claim 1 wherein the displayed thumbnail dynamically displays the current state of the information of interest on the display device.
 - [c4] 4. The system of claim 1 wherein each ticket is sharable.
 - [c5] 5. The system of claim 1 wherein each container is resizable and wherein the thumbnails hosted in any container are automatically resized after resizing that container.
 - [c6] 6. The system of claim 1 wherein at least two tickets are aggregated into at least one group.
 - [c7] 7. The system of claim 6 wherein the group is displayed as a group thumbnail within the container.
 - [c8] 8. The system of claim 7 wherein a multi-viewer is paired with the group, and wherein the multi-viewer is capable of displaying a summary within the thumbnail of the information represented by the tickets comprising the group.

- [c9] 9. The system of claim 6 wherein the group is expandable to show the tickets within the group.
- [c10] 10. The system of claim 6 wherein at least two groups are aggregated into a nested group.
- [c11] 11. The system of claim 10 wherein a multi-viewer is paired with the group, and wherein the multi-viewer is capable of displaying a summary within the thumbnail of the information represented by the tickets comprising the group.
- [c12] 12. The system of claim 6 wherein any number of groups are aggregated into any number of levels of recursively nested groups.
- [c13] 13. The system of claim 12 wherein the recursively nested groups are recursively expandable.
- [c14] 14. The system of claim 10 wherein the nested group is expandable to show the groups within the nested group.
- [c15] 15. The system of claim 7 wherein the groups within the nested group are expandable to show the tickets within the groups.
- [c16] 16. The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of the containers are persistent such that the persistent containers are not coverable by other application windows such that the persistent containers are always visible.
- [c17] 17. The system of claim 4 wherein ticket are sharable between the first user and the at least one additional user by sending at least one ticket as an email attachment.
- [c18] 18. The system of claim 1 wherein each ticket is sharable between the first user and the at least one additional user by saving each ticket to a computer readable medium, and providing the computer readable medium to the at least one additional user.
- [c19] 19. The system of claim 1 wherein at least one ticket is provided to any user by dragging and dropping at least one ticket from a remote web site to at least one user display device.

- [c20] 20. The system of claim 19 wherein a ticket dropped within a container is automatically paired with a compatible viewer, and wherein the information represented by the dropped ticket is automatically displayed as a thumbnail within the container.
- [c21] 21. The system of claim 1 wherein an actionable tooltip window is provided in response to selecting a thumbnail.
- [c22] 22. The system of claim 1 wherein the information of interest is a contact.
- [c23] 23. The system of claim 22 wherein the thumbnail provides a graphical indication of an availability status of the contact.
- [c24] 24. The system of claim 22 wherein a person window is provided in response to selecting a thumbnail representing the contact.
- [c25] 25. The system of claim 24 wherein the person window provides communications availability status of the contact via at least one communications channel.
- [c26] 26. The system of claim 25 further comprising a user interface for initiating communications via at least one of the communications channels.
- [c27] 27. The system of claim 24 wherein the person window provides a representation of a historical availability of the contact.
- [c28] 28. The system of claim 1 further comprising a capability to arrange thumbnails within the container.
- [c29] 29. The system of claim 28 wherein the thumbnails are arranged automatically.
- [c30] 30. The system of claim 28 wherein the thumbnails are arranged via a user interface.
- [c31] 31. The system of claim 5 wherein the thumbnail dynamically displays a summary of the current state of the information of interest on the display device, and wherein additional information is provided when the size of the thumbnail is increased.

- [c32] 32. The system of claim 5 wherein the thumbnail dynamically displays a summary of the current state of the information of interest on the display device, and wherein less information is provided when the size of the thumbnail is decreased.
- [c33] 33. The system of claim 1 wherein a ticket is automatically created by dragging and dropping any electronic file onto a container.
- [c34] 34. The system of claim 1 wherein each ticket is represented by an XML data structure.
- [c35] 35. The system of claim 1 wherein each ticket further includes a visibility flag, and wherein particular thumbnails are only displayed when the visibility flag is set for the associated ticket.
- [c36] 36. The system of claim 1 wherein at least one thumbnail is automatically displayed at a predetermined time in response to at least one scheduled event for a user.
- [c37] 37. A method for providing dynamic objects for automatically providing dynamically updated information to a user, comprising:
creating at least one ticket having a definition of information to be tracked and a definition of how the tracked information is to be displayed;
automatically transferring at least one ticket to a user computing device;
automatically tracking the information defined by each ticket from the user computing device via a communications interface;
dynamically retrieving the tracked information; and
providing the retrieved information to the user.
- [c38] 38. The method of claim 37 further comprising automatically reporting ticket use statistics to a remote server for providing a ticket subscription service wherein subscribers are charged a fee for user use of tickets.
- [c39] 39. The method of claim 37 wherein automatically transferring at least one ticket to a user computing device comprises sending at least one ticket to the user as an email attachment.

- [c40] 40. The method of claim 37 wherein automatically transferring at least one ticket to a user computing device comprises dragging an iconized representation of at least one ticket from a remote web page and dropping each iconized representation of tickets on a user display of the user computing device.
- [c41] 41. The method of claim 37 wherein automatically transferring at least one ticket to a user computing device comprises providing at least one ticket to the user computing device on a computer readable storage medium.
- [c42] 42. The method of claim 37 wherein each ticket is sharable between at least two users.
- [c43] 43. The method of claim 37 wherein at least one ticket is automatically transferred to the user computing device from a remote database.
- [c44] 44. The method of claim 37 wherein the tracked information is automatically cached.
- [c45] 45. The method of claim 44 wherein the cached information is displayed until updated information is retrieved.
- [c46] 46. The method of claim 45 wherein an appearance of the cached information is automatically changed over time to indicate a relative age of the information.
- [c47] 47. A computer-readable medium having computer executable instructions for automatically tracking the availability of at least one entity, said computer executable instructions comprising:
creating at least one dynamic encapsulated object for tracking the availability of each entity;
tracking the availability of each entity over time via at least one communications pathway, and compiling the tracked information for each entity over time;
dynamically providing a real-time availability status for each entity based on the tracked availability information; and
providing a historical availability for each entity based on the compiled availability information.

- [c48] 48. The computer-readable medium of claim 47 wherein providing a real-time availability status each entity comprises displaying a visual representation of each entities availability status as an icon on a user display device.
- [c49] 49. The computer-readable medium of claim 48 wherein each icon is displayed within a peripheral strip on the user display device.
- [c50] 50. The computer-readable medium of claim 48 wherein at least two icons are combined into at least one group having at least two icons each.
- [c51] 51. The computer-readable medium of claim 48 wherein each group is dynamically represented by an individual icon that is dynamically updated based on data provided by the icons inside the group.
- [c52] 52. The computer-readable medium of claim 47 wherein at least two dynamic encapsulated objects are combined into at least one group.
- [c53] 53. The computer-readable medium of claim 52 wherein each group is displayed as an individual icon within a persistent display strip on at least one display device.
- [c54] 54. The computer-readable medium of claim 50 wherein the peripheral strip covers the entire display device.
- [c55] 55. The computer-readable medium of claim 50 wherein the peripheral strip is movable about the display device.
- [c56] 56. The computer-readable medium of claim 47 wherein each dynamic encapsulated object is sharable between at least two users.
- [c57] 57. The computer-readable medium of claim 53 wherein the individual icon representing each group is sharable.
- [c58] 58. A system for automatically providing peripheral awareness of information of interest, comprising:
representing the information of interest with at least one ticket, each ticket comprising a customizable dynamic encapsulated object;
using at least one viewer for defining how the information of interest

represented by each ticket is displayed;
pairing at least one viewer with each ticket;
hosting at least one ticket/viewer pairs in at least one container on a display device, wherein each ticket/viewer pair is represented by a thumbnail displayed in one of the containers;
interacting with the information of interest by using at least one service for each ticket; and
providing the information of interest in an interactive persistent display.

- [c59] 59. The system of claim 58 wherein the services represent functionality for any of interacting with, accessing, receiving and retrieving the information of interest.
- [c60] 60. The system of claim 58 wherein each service is sharable by more than one ticket, and wherein more than one ticket can use one or more services simultaneously.
- [c61] 61. The system of claim 58 wherein more than one service is combined for use by one or more tickets for interacting with the information of interest.
- [c62] 62. A system for automatically providing peripheral awareness of information of interest to a user, comprising:
representing the information of interest with at least one ticket, each ticket comprising a customizable dynamic encapsulated object;
using at least one viewer for defining how the information of interest represented by each ticket is displayed;
pairing at least one viewer with each ticket; and
hosting at least one ticket/viewer pairs in at least one container on a display device, wherein each ticket/viewer pair is represented by a thumbnail;
displaying each thumbnail in one of the containers; and
providing at least one actionable tooltip window in response to selection of any thumbnail.
- [c63] 63. The system of claim 62 wherein the information of interest is a contact.
- [c64] 64. The system of claim 63 wherein the tooltip window includes at least one

communication access point for the contact.

- [c65] 65. The system of claim 64 further comprising automatically identifying a best available communication access point for the contact.